

CARES Monthly VISN Communication Report December 2002

The VISN-level CARES Communication Report for December 2002 is summarized on the attached spreadsheets. The first spreadsheet contains the "Stakeholder Outreach" summary; the second spreadsheet includes the unsolicited input or inquiries received from the stakeholders and others. This is the initial web-based communications reporting system.

In summary, there were 1,047,176 stakeholders, veterans, and members of the public briefed on the CARES process. This represents a total increase of 267,789 stakeholders and veterans briefed or slightly more than a sixty-one (61%) greater than in November 2002. For this month, all VISNs submitted CARES Stakeholder Outreach information. Most of the VISNs used communication modes consisting of briefings, websites, e-mails and mailings (e.g., brochures, newsletters). Of the 428,236 Veterans & Relatives contacts, 242,364 or nearly 56.6% were from VISN 4, mainly in the form of newsletters. Of the 156,173 Employee contacts, 48,010 or nearly 31% were from VISN 3. Of the 2,333 volunteer contacts, 1,029 or 44% were from VISN 3. Finally, of the 5,295 VSO contacts, 1,091 or 20.6% were from VISN 6 and VISN 17 mostly in the form of briefings.

Overall, of the 1,047,176 total stakeholders and veteran's contacts 428,236 or nearly 41% were in the form of mail outs (e.g., e-mails, brochures, and newsletters).

Concerns continue in the majority of the VISNs focused on the overall CARES process (i.e., Congressional involvement, funding, and impact), employee anxiety, potential closures, and special populations. In meetings with national VSO representatives at the VHA-VACO levels, a concern continues to be voiced that there has been insufficient contact to local, state, and regional VSO representatives regarding the CARES process.

Several areas have been identified for improvement in the communication reporting process. These are summarized below.

- The web-based system now is available and will facilitate reporting by the VISNs, compiling the national reports, and searching the database.
- In the web-based system, there are separate categories for VACO and CARES Commission communications related to CARES.
- VISNs continue to be reminded on the weekly VISN Communications Conference Calls that there is a substantial and critical need for more face-to-